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Climate & Health News

Monthly Newsletter of the JHU-UPF Public Policy Center Climate Change Working Group



JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY

PUBLIC POLICY CENTER



upf.
Universitat
Pompeu Fabra
Barcelona

MARCH 2017

February was a busy month for climate change and health!

The [Climate and Health Conference](#) sponsored by former US Vice President Al Gore's Climate Reality Project was a great success, enhancing visibility and providing optimism amid the challenges. Gore closed the event signaling out "two evolving realities:" extreme weather is becoming more frequent and more visible; and clean energy is here to stay, with costs coming down and quality rising. In terms of health, he said he "learned a lot" and flagged two key messages: health is a valuable frame for communicating about climate change; and health co-benefits will be essential in making the economic case for mitigation. He wrapped up noting that "political will is a renewable resource."

This year will see much more on the topic: The American Public Health Association has named 2017 'the year of climate change and health.' Watch for more upcoming events.

Leading news stories last month have been the complex and dangerous cycle of drought and flooding with implications for infrastructure services seen in many countries. See the stories on [Oroville in California](#) and [Mexico City](#).

In science last month, see the [review of reviews on heat impacts](#), and an interesting new integrated approach to triggers for [early warning in London](#).

NEWS

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February 2017 Climate and Health Conference

[A Civil Response to Climate Change](#)

Vice President Al Gore on climate change and health (story from Global Health Now).

[Packaging Those Inconvenient Truths](#)

Concrete advice for convincing climate change deniers (story from Global Health Now).

Storms, flooding, and sea level

[How the Oroville California dam disaster happened](#)

The St. Francis Dam was a proud symbol of California's engineering might and elaborate water system — until just before midnight on March 12, 1928, when it collapsed, killing more than 400 people in a devastating wall of water. Ever since, the state has had a reputation of diligent inspections as it has built the largest network of major public dams in the nation.

[California flooding and levees](#)

Billions of dollars in flood projects have eased fears of levee breaks near California's capital and some other cities, but state and federal workers are joining farmers with tractors in round-the-clock battles this week to stave off any chain-reaction failure of rural levees protecting farms and farm towns.

[Storm Protection Infrastructure in Louisiana](#)

The Louisiana coast is losing ground in the battle against rising seas. So the state has been working on a master plan to shore up the coast and protect homes with wetlands restoration and higher levees (\$50 billion, 50 year plan).

Heat and drought

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...nearly 1,000 feet in altitude, but it's one of a zone — the high deserts — suffering the effects of climate change quicker than the rest of us. The glaciers that once fed the city are in retreat; the seasonal rains that should replenish the reservoirs from November through February are increasingly unreliable.



[Mexico City parched, sinking and without water](#)

Always short of water, Mexico City keeps drilling deeper for more, weakening the ancient clay lake beds on which the Aztecs first built much of the city, causing it to crumble.

[Drought in Brazil](#)

Brazil's arid northeast is weathering its worst drought on record and Campina Grande, which has 400,000 residents that depend on the reservoir, is running out of water.

[Urban heat island approaches](#)

When it comes to coping with heatwaves, our own cities are conspiring against us. Road surfaces, pavements and buildings all contribute to keeping urbanised environments three to four degrees hotter than surrounding non-urbanised areas.

[West Nile virus](#)

More severe drought in the United States in the next 30 years may double the size of future epidemics

Sustainability

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[Inequalities fuel human impacts of climate](#)

For the second time this year, a group of climate scientists has called for a new approach to climate change research to produce a better and more precise idea of how the world will change as global average temperatures rise.

[A new book on climate change and health: The Holocene Climate Experience](#)

The history of climate and human health gives us a glimpse of the dramatically amplified risks we face as present trends continue.

**Source: Selected from "The Daily Climate" News Roundup and Global Health Now; click underlined link to go to news article.*

SCIENCE

The "climate-health-security" nexus

[Adapting global health aid in the face of climate change](#)

WHO estimates an additional 250 000 mortalities between 2030 and 2050 will be attributable to climate-associated increases in malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea, respiratory disease, water inaccessibility, and heat stress.

The need for climate and health indicators

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Climate change poses a host of serious threats to human health that robust public health surveillance systems can help address. It is unknown, however, whether existing surveillance systems in the United States have adequate capacity to serve that role, nor what actions may be needed to develop adequate capacity.

Review of reviews on heat and health

[Impact of ambient temperature on morbidity and mortality: An overview of reviews](#)

The objectives were (i) to conduct an overview of systematic reviews to summarize evidence from and evaluate the methodological quality of systematic reviews assessing the impact of ambient temperature on morbidity and mortality; and (ii) to reanalyse meta-analyses of cold-induced cardiovascular morbidity in different age groups.

London - diversified early warning system?

[Towards a threshold climate for emergency lower respiratory hospital admissions](#)

Identification of 'cut-points' or thresholds of climate factors would play a crucial role in alerting risks of climate change and providing guidance to policymakers. This study investigated a 'Climate Threshold' for emergency hospital admissions of chronic lower respiratory diseases by using a distributed lag non-linear model (DLNM). We analysed a unique longitudinal dataset (10 years, 2000-2009) on emergency hospital admissions, climate, and pollution factors for the Greater London.

Extreme weather and violence

[Climate Change and Collective Violence](#)

Climate change is causing increases in temperature, changes in precipitation and extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and other environmental impacts. It is also causing or contributing to heat-related disorders, respiratory and allergic disorders, infectious diseases, malnutrition due to food insecurity, and mental health disorders.

Climate and food supply

[Dietary changes to mitigate climate change and benefit public health in China](#)

Dietary change presents an opportunity to meet the dual challenges of non-communicable diseases and the effects of climate change in China. Based on a food survey and reviewed data sets, we linked nutrient composition and carbon footprint data by aggregating 1950 types of foods

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[Climate Change and Global Food Systems: Potential Impacts on Food Security and Undernutrition](#)

Great progress has been made in addressing global undernutrition over the past several decades, in part because of large increases in food production from agricultural expansion and intensification. Food systems, however, face continued increases in demand and growing environmental pressures. Most prominently, human-caused climate change will influence the quality and quantity of food we produce and our ability to distribute it equitably.

[Greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural food production to supply Indian diets: Implications for climate change mitigation](#)

Agriculture is a major source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally. The growing global population is putting pressure on agricultural production systems that aim to secure food production while minimising GHG emissions. In this study, the GHG emissions associated with the production of major food commodities in India are calculated using the Cool Farm Tool.

**Source: New entries in PubMed; click on underlined link to go to journal article abstract.*



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Climate & Health News Editor: Mary Sheehan (msheeh10@jhu.edu);
Managing Editor: Eileen McRae (emcrae4@jhu.edu).
Website Manager: Nil Barutel (nil.barutel@upf.edu).